

**MASS MEDIA:**

**The Ether Pervading the Clausewitzian Trinity**

**A Monograph**

**by**

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## 14. ABSTRACT

The media influence ongoing and future military operations by functioning as a sort of filter (or "ether") within the Clausewitzian Trinity, which coalesces the military, the people (public), and the government (policy makers). The relationship between the military and the media can be characterized as symbiotic: the media thrive on the fodder of information the military provides during times of war, and the military must use the media as a conduit in order to reach the public, which subsequently influences policy makers in a democratic system through the democratic process. This monograph explores the media's interaction with these three entities, representative of the Clausewitzian Trinity, beginning with developing an appreciation of the media, from an academic perspective. Critical literature provides two contrasting schools of thought concerning the media-government relationship, subsequent derivation of foreign (and military) policies, and who influences whom. This monograph explores Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's "Propaganda Model" from their Manufacturing Consent and maps it against the theory of "CNN Effect". These two academic models attempt to answer the question: does the government influence media output or does media output influence the government. Both arguments center on the core of the media's notion of objectivity and its consequences for the resultant news coverage. In order to leverage the military-media relationship going forward such that the media not only act as an information conduit between the military and the public and policy makers but also support the commanders' objectives in an area of operations, the implementation of several programs could improve the quality of the media message in support of support military objectives: 1) Establish centralized media campaign bodies. 2) Define, delineate and increase the interactions between the Public Affairs (PA) community and the Information Operations (IO). 3) Engender a mutually productive relationship between the military and media. And 4) Improve official press briefings and broadcasts. The military should view the media as a combat multiplier, facilitator of humanitarian assistance activities, and fashion this relationship accordingly. The media must be included as early as possible within a military operation's planning to build a level of knowledge for the media representatives and to foster solid relationships. The media provide an essential service to American democracy, providing the link between the military and the public and policy makers. With the immediacy of information flow from the field of combat, or other military operations, to the public through media channels, operational commanders, now more than ever before, must apprehend how the media impact on ongoing and future military operations via public opinion and policy makers, so that they may exert their influence within this system.

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## Abstract

MASS MEDIA: The Ether Pervading the Clausewitzian Trinity by Major Tina S. Kracke, USA, 63 pages.

The media influence ongoing and future military operations by functioning as a sort of filter (or “ether”) within the Clausewitzian Trinity, which coalesces the military, the people (public), and the government (policy makers). The relationship between the military and the media can be characterized as symbiotic: the media thrive on the fodder of information the military provides during times of war, and the military must use the media as a conduit in order to reach the public, which subsequently influences policy makers in a democratic system through the democratic process.

This monograph explores the media’s interaction with these three entities, representative of the Clausewitzian Trinity, beginning with developing an appreciation of the media, from an academic perspective. Critical literature provides two contrasting schools of thought concerning the media-government relationship, subsequent derivation of foreign (and military) policies, and who influences whom. This monograph explores Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s “Propaganda Model” from their *Manufacturing Consent* and maps it against the theory of “CNN Effect”. These two academic models attempt to answer the question: does the government influence media output or does media output influence the government. Both arguments center on the core of the media’s notion of objectivity and its consequences for the resultant news coverage.

Like most relationships, the military-media relationship has evolved with changes in society and technology. A historical examination from the World Wars through ongoing operations in Iraq of this relationship provides trends and offers insights for the future. Maintaining public opinion that favors the military remains a challenge, especially as wars become protracted. Balancing the public’s right to know and the reality of the horrors of war becomes a burden that the media and the military share. The military has walked a fine line between inclusion and exclusion of media on the battlefield.

In order to leverage the military-media relationship going forward such that the media not only act as an information conduit between the military and the public and policy makers but also support the commanders’ objectives in an area of operations, the implementation of several programs could improve the quality of the media message in support of support military objectives: 1) Establish centralized media campaign bodies. 2) Define, delineate and increase the interactions between the Public Affairs (PA) community and the Information Operations (IO). 3) Engender a mutually productive relationship between the military and media. And 4) Improve official press briefings and broadcasts. The military should view the media as a combat multiplier, facilitator of humanitarian assistance activities, and fashion this relationship accordingly. The media must be included as early as possible within a military operation’s planning to build a level of knowledge for the media representatives and to foster solid relationships. The media provide an essential service to American democracy, providing the link between the military and the public and policy makers. With the immediacy of information flow from the field of combat, or other military operations, to the public through media channels, operational commanders, now more than ever before, must apprehend how the media impact on ongoing and future military operations via public opinion and policy makers, so that they may exert their influence within this system.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The media and the military, arguably, share a common purpose: supporting democracy and upholding the Constitution. This shared purpose, ironically, places them at conflict during times of war. The media covet unfettered access to information while operational commanders seek to ensure mission accomplishment, security, and the safety of their soldiers. However, the media serve as a sort of gatekeeper through which information concerning military activities must pass in order to reach the public and policy makers. The media have the enviable opportunity to exert influence on the public and policy makers who must rely on the media for access to military information. The public also influences policy makers, both through the democratic process and by voicing “public opinion”, often filtered through the media. This places the media in an advantageous position of influence vis-à-vis the operational commander, who must comply with Department of Defense Directive 5122.5 (DOD Principles for News Media Coverage of DOD Operations) and provide open access to the media.

The operational commander dictates the terms, determines his message, and exercises control of media access, in accordance with the DOD Directive. This places the commander in a position of authority over the media, who must acquiesce to the commander’s terms in order to obtain access to information during times of war. With its dramatic battles, amazing technology, and inherent danger, war offers media the material for interesting news. The operational



commander uses this danger of war as a justification for denial of access to the reporter. After all, soldiers make combat their business, and they best understand its dangers.

In the reporting of distant wars, such as the ongoing war in Iraq, the media serve as the primary source of information for the public and many policy makers. President George Bush Sr. stated about coverage of the Persian Gulf War, “I learn more from CNN than I do from the CIA.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, the immediacy of real-time coverage often fails to permit the media its traditional checks and balances of editing and source verification, leading to “increasingly imperfect and flawed information”,<sup>2</sup> according to former BBC reporter Nik Gowing. He feels that, “As a result the integrity, accuracy, and balance of high profile information that seizes the high ground in moments of crisis and tension is often – though not always – not quite what it seems.”<sup>3</sup>

Since the media capture only a limited perspective of a war, tainted even further by personal and/or corporate bias, they tend to simplify a war through the inherent impossibility of portraying its complexity. Philip Taylor, a noted academic on the media and military relationship, refers to this phenomenon through comparison of the ‘real war’ to the ‘media war’.<sup>4</sup> The media cannot share the horrors of war, with its violence, bloodshed and killing, but rather must portray a sense of the fighting that is palatable to the commercial audience. The audience experiences the war in a virtual sense, devoid of its reality, and as a distant spectacle. The

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<sup>1</sup> Bush quoted in Frank J. Stech, “Winning CNN Wars”, from Parameters, Autumn 1994, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Nik Gowing, “War and Accountability – Media in conflict: the new reality not yet understood,” from Forum, April 2002, available from [http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng\).nsf/htmlall/594HLS/\\$File/58-63\\_gowing\\_crop.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng).nsf/htmlall/594HLS/$File/58-63_gowing_crop.pdf); Internet, accessed on 3 Sep 03.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

media's perspective, resulting from the camera's angle, the frame of the photographs, the details captured or omitted in a story, become the story of the war for the audience. As no one news story or television clip can capture all of the action and activities of a war, "Each constitutes one piece in a mosaic."<sup>5</sup> Before we delve into these inherent dichotomies, let us establish the framework of our terminology.

## Definitions of Terms

This analysis uses the following definitions as a basis for discussion: "Media" (also mass media) includes the senders (journalists and reporters) who convey information or messages via formalized mediums (print, television, radio, internet, etc.) to receivers (audience(s)) within the global arena.<sup>6</sup> This definition of media would be incomplete without a realization that media derive resources and agendas from the big businesses owning and operating the mediums. The second chapter examines media roles and motivations. The use of the "Military" will be confined to the United States military, and its coalition partners when operating in a coalition environment, at the strategic level and below. The "public" refers to "The general body of mankind, or of a nation, state, or community; the people, indefinitely; ... also, a particular body or aggregation of people; as, an author's public."<sup>7</sup> "Policy [embodies the] settled method by which the government and affairs of a nation are, or may be, administered; a system of public or official administration, as designed to promote the external or internal prosperity of a state."<sup>8</sup> Limiting the definition of government to the executive and legislative branches, while including subordinate departments, makes it too vague. So, for the purpose of this study, let us include those portions of the

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<sup>4</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Global Communications, International Affairs and the Media since 1945*, (London: Routledge, 1997) 119.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 120.

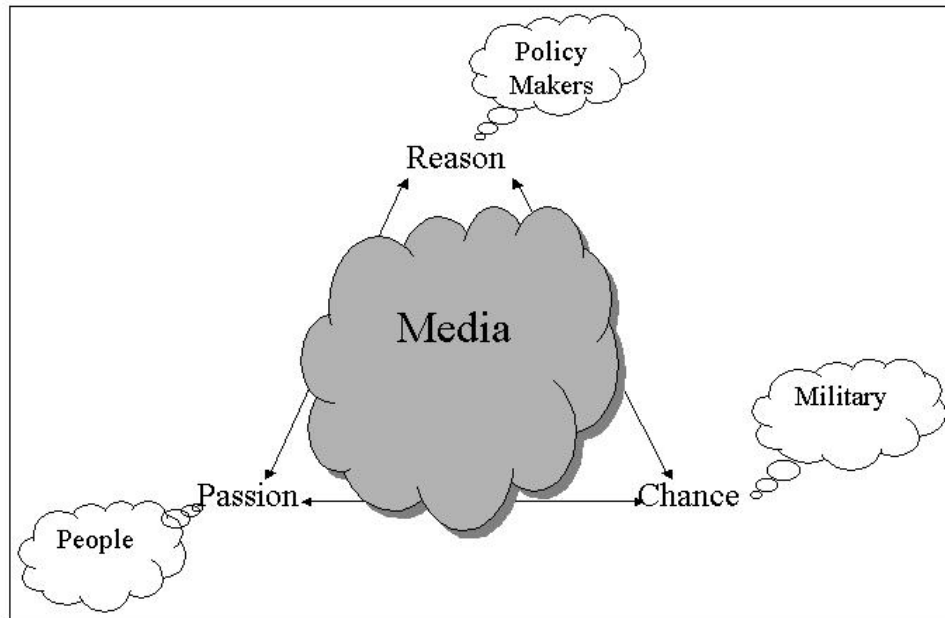
<sup>6</sup> Colin Seymour-Ure, *The Political Impact of Mass Media* (London: Constable, 1974), 15-20. This definition amalgamates research and uses Seymour-Ure's terms: sender, message, medium, and receiver.

<sup>7</sup> Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, © 1996, 1998 MICRA, Inc. Available from <http://dictionary.reference.com/>; Internet; accessed 28 September 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

government with the capability to influence policy over the military, specifically the National Security Council (NSC).<sup>9</sup>

### Media and the Clausewitzian Trinity



**Figure 1: Media: The "Ether" Pervading the Clausewitzian Trinity**

The relationship between the military and the media can be traced to the American Revolutionary War, with the media impacting upon operations since the Crimean War in 1854.

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<sup>9</sup> LTC (Ret) Robert D. Walz, USA, describes the NSC's most important roles as policy coordination with affected agencies and "providing policy advice to the President." The NSC was created by the National Security Act of 1947 and its members include the President, Vice-President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and other members as required. See LTC Robert D. Walz. "U.S. National Security: Organization and Process." Fort Leavenworth, KS: DJMO, USACGSC, 1-14. The Judiciary branch may also come into play, but this is relatively rare in foreign policy.

This relationship can be characterized as symbiotic: the media thrive on the fodder of information the military provides during times of war, and the military must use the media as a conduit in order to reach the public, which subsequently influences policy makers in a democratic system through the democratic process. Carl von Clausewitz, the preeminent war philosopher, described war as adaptive as a “chameleon”. Its “dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity – composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.”<sup>10</sup> Clausewitz prescribed war “as an instrument of policy”<sup>11</sup> which should function in balance between these dominant tendencies. The media influence ongoing and future military operations by functioning as a sort of filter (or “ether”) within this Clausewitzian Trinity, which coalesces the military, the people (public), and the government (policy makers).<sup>12</sup> Information, especially during times of war, passes through this “ether”, similar to Clausewitz’s “fog of war” when traversing between any of these three parties (Figure 1).

This monograph explores the media’s interaction with the three entities of the Clausewitzian Trinity, beginning with developing an appreciation of the media, from an academic perspective. Like most relationships, the military-media relationship has evolved with changes in society and technology. A historical examination of this relationship provides trends and offers insights for the future. Applying historical precedence and trends to the academic perspectives

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<sup>10</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 89.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 88.

gained concerning the media will provide the tools for analysis. This analysis should lead to a comprehensive picture for optimizing the military- media relationship going forward. With the immediacy of information flow from the field of combat, or other military operations, to the public through media channels, operational commanders, now more than ever before, must apprehend how the media impact on ongoing and future military operations via public opinion and policy makers, so that they may exert their influence within this system.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FREE PRESS?

*Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom... of the press.*<sup>13</sup>

During the 1971 case commonly known as “The Pentagon Papers”, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black characterized the press’s role in democracy as service to the governed – the public – rather than the government. The Founding Fathers of the United States created the First Amendment to the Constitution in the Bill of Rights providing freedom to the press, without censorship, such that the press “could bare the secrets of the government and inform the people.”<sup>14</sup> This places the media in a role as “watch-dog” over the government for the public, allowing the media to perform as a check and/or balance to the government. Our national concerns for information when the Bill of Rights was penned were mostly limited to the thirteen colonies. These somewhat simple national concerns for information have mushroomed to include global interests, especially in times of conflict and war. In this complex and global society, however, people do not have immediate and direct access to the activities of the government or to events unfolding throughout the world. Media provide this link between the government and the people of a democratic society by offering mediums with access to information covering these events and activities of interest throughout the world, informing the peoples’ decisions. The

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Constitution, amend 1.

<sup>14</sup> New York Times Co. v. United States #1873, 403 U.S. 713 (1971), available from <http://www.multied.com/documents/Pentagonpapers.html>; Internet, accessed on 28 November 2003.

people formulate opinion and demonstrate their choices by participating in the electoral process and through voicing opinion to influence policymaking and other “political participation, such as congress.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, the media execute a critical role within our democratic process. The public’s access to information depends upon the media. The challenge lies in examining the information provided by the media for accuracy, potential bias, and fairness.

In an ideal democracy, the First Amendment provides for a press or media independent of government, with uncensored access and accurate information. In the real world, however, time, space, funding, and human factors limit or act as filters to information. “Journalists help mold public understanding and opinion by deciding what is important and what may be ignored, what is subject to debate and what is beyond question, and what is true and false.”<sup>16</sup> They decide what constitutes news, the perspective for presentation, and what to leave out. Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, communications and public policy academicians, use the metaphors of lenses and frames to describe this phenomenon. Reporters view the world through ‘lenses’ of “shifting perspectives” consisting of their values and related judgments. The metaphor of ‘frames’, suggests reporters select the fixed limit for the information, resulting in views arranged and “packaged” into stories.<sup>17</sup> These metaphors suggest the media present a snapshot to the public, which by its nature sacrifices objectivity.

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<sup>15</sup> Dean E. Alger, *The Media and Politics*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1996), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, *The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists, and the Stories That Shape the Political World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), xiii.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, xii-xvii.

As media interaction with the military has been a constant factor of war, it is incumbent upon the military leader to understand media roles and motivations in order to leverage this relationship. Critical literature provides two contrasting schools of thought concerning the media-government relationship, subsequent derivation of foreign (and military) policies, and who influences whom. The arguments can be characterized as a chicken-egg dilemma; and both merit examination. They attempt to answer the question: does the government influence media output or does media output influence the government? An educated response may be: it depends!<sup>18</sup> Both arguments center on the core of the media's notion of objectivity and its consequences for the resultant news coverage. For the purpose of objective analysis, let us consider that the arguments are situationally dependent and not mutually exclusive.

### **“Manufacturing Consent”<sup>19</sup>**

Media academicians Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, summarizing their ‘manufacturing consent’ argument, assert “The media serve the interests of state and corporate power, which are closely interlinked, framing their reporting and analysis in a manner supportive of established privilege and limiting debate and discussion accordingly.”<sup>20</sup> They present a “propaganda model” as structure and support for this argument. This model consists of five

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<sup>18</sup> These two schools of thought are discussed at length throughout most of the critical literature included in the bibliography, but are best summarized by: Piers Robinson. *The CNN Effect: The myth of news, foreign policy and intervention*, (London: Routledge, 2002) 1-16. Robinson refers to Herman & Chomsky, Mermin, Shaw, Hallin et. al. throughout his discussion.

<sup>19</sup> Term coined by: Walter Lippman according to Edwards S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988, 2002) lix.

‘filters’, which consciously or unconsciously thwart journalistic objectivity and influence the lenses, frames, stories, and agendas of the mass media. It focuses on the power wielded by information and wealth. Even though the military, through the NCS, is subordinate to the government and this model asserts that the government controls the media, the media agenda may not necessarily align with that of the military commander. Thus, it is important to identify the effects of the five filters on the media’s information or message in order to play a role in the framing of the resultant story. Herman and Chomsky’s ‘propaganda’ model consists of the following five news filters:

(1) The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism.<sup>21</sup>

Let us examine these filters and how they influence media performance; and then superimpose them on military information.

Thomas Paines idealized the role of the media as a “watchdog”, where news coverage of governmental policy and its execution would “champion... truth and openness, checking the tendency of the powerful to conceal and dissemble”.<sup>22</sup> The journalists investigate governmental activities, capture the truth, and share it with the public. Operating under this ideal would require media independence from the government and maintenance of objectivity during investigation and reporting. However, the media are beholden to a conflicting interest of this ideal by commerce and government regulation through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

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<sup>20</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies*, (South End Press, 1989) from [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Chomsky/Necessary\\_Illusions.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Chomsky/Necessary_Illusions.html), accessed on 20 December 2003, 10.

<sup>21</sup> Herman and Chomsky, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel C. Hallin, *The “Uncensored War”: The Media and Vietnam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 5.



The media operate as commercial entities within an American system of capitalism. Even the so-called “public” television and radio have commercial and privatized elements.<sup>23</sup> When our forefathers drafted the Bill of Rights, the printed medium of privately owned newspapers predominated the media. Since then, communications technology evolution has changed the proliferation of media and news media with expansion in the sheer volume of information and the available media mediums. These changes in technology drove the cost of acquiring media outlets higher, decreasing the access to ownership and driving concentration of media mediums into consolidated media conglomerates that control many different kinds of media (television, magazines, books, movies and music). “[In] 1983, fifty giant firms dominated almost every mass medium”,<sup>24</sup> but today ten multinationals control the media universe.”<sup>25</sup> Annex 1 provides a chart depicting the revenues of these ten media conglomerates. They own and operate the overwhelming majority of: television (networks and stations, cable production and distribution, and production of content); movies through major film studio ownership; magazines and books; music labels; radio stations and networks; sports teams, live venues and theme parks; and other entertainment and related communications interests.<sup>26</sup>

The newspaper industry has undergone this same consolidation for the print mediums not already acquired by the big ten media conglomerates. Between 1940 and 1983, “the proportion

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<sup>23</sup> Alger, 88.

<sup>24</sup> Herman and Chomsky, xiii.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Crispin Miller, “What’s Wrong With This Picture?,” *The Nation* (7 January 2002) from <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?I=20020107&s=miller>; Internet; accessed on 23 December 2003.

<sup>26</sup> For more specific details on who owns what, please go to Miller’s article for a graphic depiction.

[of independent ownership] was reversed with 80% owned by corporate chains”.<sup>27</sup> Annex 1 lists the owners of multiple newspapers with their holdings and circulation. Compounding the concentration of newspaper ownership has been a decrease in “intra-market competition” from 502 cities with at least two competing newspapers in 1923 to 36 cities in 1979.<sup>28</sup>

Some may argue that the Internet and new communication technologies provide mediums for the transmission of unfiltered media and information. The Internet provides a forum for fluid information exchange and allows for some escape from the mainstream media. As global access to computers and transmission capability improves, the volume and variety of information available will increase. It also provides the capability for independent individuals to share information, improving immediacy and decreasing the element of space. For example, the Internet served as the first medium that reported the student uprisings of 1986 in Beijing, China, before international journalists arrived at the scene and the Chinese government censored the information. While the Internet often offers disparate and alternative access to media information, it is not subject to the same accuracy and quality controls of the traditional media, such as competition with other media sources, accountability, and commerce. One must also note, however, that the big ten media conglomerates control network access and communication transmission capabilities, and input content through their owned and operated sources, such as the dot-coms of major networks and publications, and holdings such as “AOL.com”.

The loosening of governmental controls and regulations has also accelerated the trend towards consolidation of the media. The Communications Act of 1934 established the FCC to

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<sup>27</sup> Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) ix, 4.

regulate interstate communications and broadcasting, to serve public interest.<sup>29</sup> Their legislation and policies have typically limited the proliferation and ownership of communications and broadcast assets in order to foster competition and reduce the chances of monopolization. Since 1970, however, the FCC has reduced the limitations on ownership of multiple broadcast outlets and allowed for intra-market competition by sole owners. The Telecommunication Act of 1996 has also allowed the access of former communications providers into the media market and vice-versa. Furthermore, the media industry has become vertically and horizontally integrated.<sup>30</sup> Ownership (size, concentration, and wealth) captures much of Herman and Chomsky's 'propaganda model's' first filter and brings us to media motivation or "profit orientation".

The media conglomerates derive revenue and profits by competing for the public's interest and from advertising. Greater access to the public generates more interest from advertisers. Since advertisers seek to generate revenue, they choose to advertise in media outlets with large and affluent audiences. Advertising funds the media's capability to compete more aggressively for news, information, and programs that appeal to the advertisers' target markets. Thus, the advertisers become "patrons' who provide media subsidy... [And] the media compete for their patronage."<sup>31</sup> "Patronage" translates to power in influencing media decisions about content, limiting "the programs with serious complexities and disturbing controversies that interfere with the 'buying mood'".<sup>32</sup> Advertising influence acts as Herman and Chomsky's second filter.

In addition to competing for advertisers' patronage, media conglomerates operate for profit, with accountability to stockholders and the whims of the market. Reporters and journalists

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<sup>28</sup> Alger, 91.

<sup>29</sup> They implemented their decisions through the instrument of licenses, which were rarely enforced as license holders automatically expected renewal of their licenses based upon outlay of capital in technology.

<sup>30</sup> Alger 87-118 and Erwin G. Krasnow, et. al, "The Politics of Broadcast Regulation" in Doris A. Graber, *Media Power in Politics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1994) 381-392.

<sup>31</sup> Herman and Chomsky, 16.

“fashion the news” to tantalize, entertain, and shock their audience. “Good news seldom sells papers; dull news never does. So, inevitably, our news is everlastingly sensationalized.”<sup>33</sup> War and military activities offer opportunities for stories that will tantalize, entertain and gain audience share. In their quest for profits, media compete for stories that will produce headlines and make for good television. They compete for unique perspectives to present within their frames and through their lenses, influenced by the two filters discussed above. Frames capture an incomplete version of reality, isolated in time, scope, and relationship to other events. However, these images encompass the entirety of the public’s view of an event.<sup>34</sup> Consider the dramatic images presented on television following the attacks at the World Trade Center on 9/11: specific images certainly come to mind for the average American. These snapshots in time present the reality of that horrific event for those who viewed them. Since time, space, and funding limit reporters and subsequent media coverage, the bottom line drives what is newsworthy and sets the media agenda.

Media compete for sources to lend legitimacy to their stories, in addition to competing for advertiser’s funds and audience share. As the competitiveness of the media industry does not allow reporters the luxury of omniscience and omnipresence, it forces them to concentrate resources where important news most likely transpires – Washington. Washington, the center of our government also provides the sources that yield the “raw material of news”. The White House, Pentagon, Congress, and other government officials operate official public information services. These services largely dictate what becomes news and the media rely upon them as their primary source. Herman and Chomsky assert “The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>33</sup> Miles Hudson and John Stanier, *War and the Media: A Random Searchlight*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998) xi.

<sup>34</sup> Images can be used to convey televised, print, and voice media, as written and spoken reporting also creates images for the receiver.

interest.”<sup>35</sup> Herman and Chomsky refer to this phenomenon as sourcing, which serves as their third media filter.

Since 1945, there have been as many as thirty-five wars taking place in a given year,<sup>36</sup> but not every conflict or war captures Washington’s public agenda. These public information services signal to the media where to search for news by official recognition or discussion of an event. Once a conflict is deemed “newsworthy”, media organizations dispatch journalists to the scene and what becomes news depends upon where reporters and journalist happen to be. Once one media source reports on an event as news, others flock to the scene, like moths to a light, due to the fierce competition between organizations. Since media organizations cannot afford to send their own foreign correspondents everywhere, they often rely upon freelance reporters, called “stringers”, to provide local coverage of newsworthy events, which may call into question reliability or bias. In addition to gathering information from the field from their own reporters and correspondents, many organizations depend on wire services, principally the Associated Press and Reuters for validation.<sup>37</sup> Thus, much of the information received by the public comes from common sources.

Access to crisis events, such as war, further limits the information available for media coverage. In times of war, the government controls the media’s movements and delivers many of its messages through press conferences. The military spokesperson speaks directly to the public,

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<sup>35</sup> Herman and Chomsky, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 115.

<sup>37</sup> David D. Newsom, *The Public Dimension of Foreign Policy*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996) 45.

utilizing the media's mediums, making press conferences "public conferences".<sup>38</sup> Use of official sources and limits on access restrict the diversity of the information presented. To differentiate their stories, the media often add their own commentary or that of an "expert" and supplement the conference coverage with video or photo shots. Major networks commonly used retired and "former" military experts to provide analysis and commentary for coverage of conflicts such as Desert Storm and the current war in Iraq. However, this expert analysis and commentary rarely does more than echo the official view for fear of alienating the audience. The immediacy of real time coverage further reduces the journalists' ability to obtain additional sources because of demands for speed and brevity.<sup>39</sup> This common sourcing results in little variation from one news product to another and leads to conformity in news media coverage of major crisis.

The media's reliance upon official sources for information correlates the media's range of debate to that of the government, rather than allowing the media to function as independent and critical observers of foreign policy. Contrary to the accepted belief that independently critical media coverage of the U.S. war in Vietnam generated public opposition to the war (the "CNN Effect"), Daniel C. Hallin and W. Lance Bennett assert that the media's critical perspective of the war reflected debate internal to Washington. Bennett refers to this phenomenon as "indexing" where "the spectrum of debate in the news...is a function of the spectrum of debate in official Washington."<sup>40</sup> He uses an examination of New York Times coverage of U.S. funding for the Nicaraguan Contras to illustrate his argument. If the media allows the government to define the

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<sup>38</sup> Taylor. *Global Communications*, 133.

<sup>39</sup> Newsom, 64-65.

gauge limiting the spectrum of debate, then one should question the degree of the media's independence from the government and the true freedom of the press. Furthermore, consensus in Washington would minimize or eliminate journalistic debate and exacerbate "cookie cutter" media coverage. The "CNN Effect" argument opposes this view and will be discussed in the next section.

"Flak", as used for the fourth filter of Herman and Chomsky's "propaganda model", refers to negative responses from the public or official agencies to controversial media material.<sup>41</sup> Corporations founded agencies, such as Accuracy in Media (AIM), the American Legal Foundation, and the Capital Legal Foundation, for the specific purpose of producing this "flak". These agencies respond to the corporate interests they serve. Non-partisan, non-profit agencies, such as The Center for Media and Public Affairs, also serve to mediate the objectivity and fairness of the press. The fear of "flak" or criticism functions as a filter for journalists and editors limiting their output. "Flak" also reinforces advertisers' funding decisions. While Herman and Chomsky's fifth filter, anti-communism as a control measure, appears obsolete with the end of the Cold War, they explain that this filter intended to cover the broader perspective of capitalism and free-market societies.<sup>42</sup> This fifth filter reinforces the corporate interests of the media discussed above.

### **The CNN Effect**

The term "CNN Effect"<sup>43</sup> originated from real time coverage of the 1991 Gulf War and "has become a generic term for the ability of real-time communications technology, via the news media, to provoke major responses from domestic audiences and political elites to both global

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<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Mermin, *Debating War and Peace: Media Coverage of U.S. Intervention in the Post-Vietnam Era*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 4 and Robinson 14.

<sup>41</sup> Herman and Chomsky, 26.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, xvii-xviii.

<sup>43</sup> This term includes not only the Cable News Network (CNN) but also other conveyers of real-time media.

and national events.”<sup>44</sup> Media academicians debate the validity of the CNN Effect by trying to prove or disprove the link between the media’s conveyed images, public opinion, and a knee-jerk government response. The decision to provide airlifted humanitarian assistance, subsequent military intervention, and the removal of U.S. Forces from Somalia and Operation Provide Comfort in Iraq (1991) are commonly cited as examples to support a case for a CNN Effect. Bernard C. Cohen asserts: “By focusing daily on the starving children in Somalia, a pictorial story tailor-made for television, TV mobilized the conscience of the nation’s public institutions, compelling the government into a policy of intervention for humanitarian reasons.”<sup>45</sup> While images of starving Somali children may have supported the government’s decision to intervene, studies conducted by Piers Robinson and Jonathan Mermin determined that Somalia became a media issue after prompting from Congress. Mermin tracked media coverage of Somalia by phase (see Appendix 2) and determined that media coverage responded to the level of activity in Washington, rather than initiating it. Somalia entered the media agenda in Mermin’s Phase 1 with coverage of U.N. diplomatic efforts; and, interest in the situation peaked in July and August only after Senator Kassebaum declared U.N. efforts inadequate and called for action.<sup>46</sup> The same pattern holds true prior to and following the U.S. decision for military intervention (see Appendix 2). Somalia received minimal attention until November 26, when President Bush’s (Sr.) decision

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<sup>44</sup> Robinson, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Bernard C. Cohen, “A View from the Academy” in W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz, *Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) 9-10.

<sup>46</sup> Mermin, 126.



to assist the U.N. with U.S. military personnel was leaked to the press.<sup>47</sup> The media framing of the situation in Somalia as a humanitarian crisis, while not predicated intervention, certainly supported a case for government action, for the American public. Mermin and Robinson reached this same conclusion in the study of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Kurdish Iraq.<sup>48</sup>

### **Media Effects on Public Opinion**

Martin Shaw took a different approach in his analysis of the media's impact on the decision to intervene in Kurdish Iraq, following Desert Storm. He asserts that media framing of the Kurds as victims exerted pressure on policymakers to intervene: "graphic portrayal of human tragedy...skillfully juxtaposed with the responsibility... of those [Western] leaders [created] a political challenge...impossible to ignore".<sup>49</sup> While Shaw analyzed the response to media bytes, he failed to place media coverage within the period of policy formation and did not formulate correlation. He instead focused on the media's role "in shaping perceptions" through the selection of victims, heroes, or demonization of characters, such as Saddam Hussein.<sup>50</sup> These characterizations rarely contradicted governmental policy. However, when government does not clearly define its policy, mobilizing opinion, and subsequently influencing policy, becomes more difficult. For example, the U.S. selected a policy of non-intervention as a response to the atrocities in Rwanda, even though the media framed the situation as a humanitarian crisis due to

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<sup>47</sup> Robinson, 52-54.

<sup>48</sup> Mermin, 140-2, and Robinson 63-9.

<sup>49</sup> Martin Shaw, *Civil Society and the Media in Crisis: Representing Distant Violence*, (London: Pinter, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 144.

the complexity of the situation. Media attention to the atrocities did not generate a policy response.

### **Media ... The Fourth Estate?**

The media in today's society serve the role of informant, especially in the cases of distant violence in times of war. They provide the eyes and context through which the public views events and the formulation of policy. We have seen that their agendas reflect that of the government and the corporate interests that control them, truly limiting their ability to serve as the "fourth estate" or watchdog to the government. While "freedom of the press" gives journalist free reign to criticize or provide alternative views to government activities, we have seen that reliance on official sources and competition censors the resultant news product. "Their independence [from the government] exists in principle but does not manifest itself in practice."<sup>51</sup> Given this perspective and the understanding that the media serve as the primary conduit of information from the battlefield to the public, and often the policy makers, facilitating a relationship with the media has been a challenge for the military. A historical examination of the relationship between the military and the media may provide a valuable perspective on how to capitalize on this relationship and provide greater input into framing the news that reaches the public and policy makers.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

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<sup>51</sup> Mermin, 144.

## HISTORY OF THE MEDIA-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

*The first casualty when war comes is truth.*<sup>52</sup>

David Bloom, NBC's popular reporter embedded with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, crafted many of the images which became the memories of the war in Iraq for the American public. Bloom broadcasted dramatic streaming video from his "Bloom-mobile" in the combat zone directly into living rooms. He lived, ate, traveled and slept with the troops, and even wore a military uniform.<sup>53</sup> The relationship between the media and the military has not always appeared so harmonious. Critics of embedding tossed around complaints of the media's loss of objectivity and limited perspective. Both the embedded reporter and the military leader decisions were fraught with determining the balance between the public's right to know and operational security, which directly impacted upon an embedded reporter. Security issues forced the military to restrict some reporters from the theater. Geraldo Rivera, for example, drew diagrams in the sand revealing information about upcoming operations. The military did not always afford the media the opportunity for embedding during war.

"Cooperative arrangements...for managing the media, designed to accommodate the public's right to know have been overridden by the military's *perceived need to limit and manipulate* [italics added] the media in order to enlist and maintain national and international public support."<sup>54</sup> These arrangements have changed with the nature of warfare since William

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<sup>52</sup> Senator Hiram Johnson, 1917.

<sup>53</sup> David Bloom died of heart related complications in the combat zone before he was able to write a comprehensive account of his time in Iraq.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Young and Peter Jesser, *The Media and the Military: From the Crimea to Desert Strike*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 2.

Russell declared himself the first “war correspondent” and provided coverage of the 1854 war in Crimea. Technology and society have evolved greatly since Russell reported his view of this war. However, his challenges with “oversimplification of complex issues and an insistent irrational drive towards war derived not from an objective examination of the facts but from an induced and often false emotion”<sup>55</sup> continue to trouble the media today. These challenges have led to a media-military relationship that critics and academicians typically characterize as adversarial, controversial, or uneasy,<sup>56</sup> which has continued to evolve since Russell wrote about the Crimean war. Since the mass media are a twentieth-century phenomenon,<sup>57</sup> we begin our historical review of the media-military relationship with the World Wars.

### **The World Wars**

In an article to *The Nation* magazine in 1917, T.S. Eliot included a letter from an officer on the Western front conveying battlefield conditions: “The leprous earth, scattered with the swollen and blackened corpses of hundreds of young men. The appalling stench of rotten carrion...”<sup>58</sup> This depiction of World War I conditions contrasts greatly with the patriotic view of glory and honor the government wished to portray, in order to sustain troop and public morale during a protracted war with unprecedented casualties. Following the Russo-Japanese War (1904), Britain established a War Press Bureau with a Chief Censor designated to manage the reporting of the war in France. With Britain’s entry into the war in 1914, Lord Kitchener denied

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<sup>55</sup> Hudson and Stanier, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Jason D. Holm, uses “adversarial”, Hudson and Stanier use “controversial”, and Young and Jesser use “uneasy” when discussing this relationship.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 4.

war correspondents access to the battlefields. However, a London Times correspondent, Arthur Moore, broke a story of heavy British losses at Mons, later known as the Amiens dispatch, which Kitchener denied because it contained “inaccurate and unpatriotic alarmist war news.”<sup>59</sup> This controversy led to the appointment of military officers to create press releases, which sanitized military actions. Contradiction to these releases, from Charles a’Court Repington, an analyst operating in London, forced the military to allow correspondents to operate in the field.<sup>60</sup> These reporters experienced both censorship and denied access.

Upon U.S. entry into the war, the government “mobilized the Committee on Public Information...to sell the war to end all wars and to maintain public support.”<sup>61</sup> Reporters commonly demonized the Germans and idealized Allied war efforts. Since the media generally supported the war, their patriotism and professional sense of duty did not predicate the censorship and controls placed upon them, especially since technology hampered timely disclosure of military activities.

Although World War II saw greater proliferation of new technologies, such as the radio and newsreel, the level of military censorship and control of media activities within Britain and the U.S. remained virtually unchanged, resulting in uniformity of the media’s output. Journalists saw themselves as part of the war effort. Given that their nations fought for survival, the media permitted the government and the military to exert almost absolute control over information such that “objectivity largely superseded thought of commercial success.”<sup>62</sup> However, the great number of media personnel (150 correspondents filing stories to 278 million readers in 6

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<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Hudson and Stanier, 40, from Nicholas Pronay and D.W. Spring, eds., *Propaganda, Politics and Film 1918-45*, (London: Macmillan, 1982).

<sup>59</sup> History summarize from Young and Jesser, 32 (quoted), and Hudson and Stanier, 46-7.

<sup>60</sup> Young and Jesser, 30-33.

<sup>61</sup> Jason D. Holm, “Get Over It! Repairing the Military’s Adversarial Relationship With the Press” from *Military Review*, January-February 2002. <http://www-cgsc.army.mil/milrev/english/JanFeb02/holm.asp>, Internet.

<sup>62</sup> Hudson and Stanier, 64.

continents after the invasion of Europe<sup>63</sup>) improved reporting accuracy. Technological advances enhanced the media's capability to reach the public and policy makers: radio improved timeliness and newsreels lent creditability to the reports.

The government and military recognized the media's important role in maintaining support from the home front and accommodated press correspondents. General Eisenhower stated policy for his correspondents: "I regard war correspondents as quasi staff officers...[with] greater responsibility than that of a competitive newsman...I trust you...As staff officers however your first duty is a military duty."<sup>64</sup> The military continued to exercise censorship, require press accreditation, and enforced access restrictions for operational security purposes; and the media accepted these restrictions. Media continued to use formalized channels for sourcing: official statements, press releases, and wire services, such as the Associated Press and Reuters. During these wars of national survival, the media and the military complimented each other in support of government policy by imposing and tolerating restraints on the release of information to the public and shaped the news to support government policy.

## **Korea**

The end of World War II and the subsequent revolution in Russia resulted in a bi-polar world. Korea marked the first example of a nuclear-age war with limited aims for the U.S., providing no immediate threat to the external nations involved and based upon this bi-polar world with the stated aim of containing communism. Patriotic reporting in support of the WWII war effort earned the media the military's trust; and the military initially permitted the media self-

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 82.

censorship in the Korean theater. However, the harsh climate, primitive conditions, and the distance between the theater of war and the media audiences forced the media to rely upon the military for accommodations, transportation, and transmission of media copy. This provided the military the opportunity to exert a modicum of control over media actions through “selection and delay”.<sup>65</sup>

However, when analysts and journalist outside the theater of war criticized the war and “[incurred] popular disquiet about the unpatriotic media coverage, it was [the war correspondents] who approached the Department of Defense for clarification, not the other way around.”<sup>66</sup> The media’s fear of “alienating their customers if the ‘whole truth’ [of the realities of war] were told”<sup>67</sup> coincided with the military’s need to shield the public; yet, neither acknowledged this common interest. However, when their interests came into conflict, the military reserved the right to edit and censor the media. When South Koreans began systematically executing “communist prisoners of war,” including women and children, the media, specifically Alan Dower of the Melbourne Herald and some other correspondents, published coverage of these atrocities. As this negative coverage of the South Korean ally’s activities could undermine the United Nations war efforts and sow discord among both the troops and the home front, “General MacArthur... imposed full military censorship on news messages, broadcasts, magazine articles, and photographs from Korea...[without leniency].”<sup>68</sup> As Democratic nations provided conscript soldiers to fight the war, the military realized its accountability to the public. Public support and maintaining legitimacy guided military and media activities in support of government policy.

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<sup>64</sup> Young and Jesser, 40.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 106.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Phillip Knightly, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo*, (Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975, 2000), 374-377.

## Vietnam

Vietnam offers the most striking example of perceived military-media dissonance. “The most deeply rooted myth, which has become almost impossible to budge in military thinking, is the widely-held belief that the media in general and television in particular helped America lose the war in Vietnam.”<sup>69</sup> The military needed a scapegoat for its failure to achieve the policy aims set by an increasingly discordant government and found this scapegoat in the media. While the complexities of the war in Vietnam merit discussion, they extend far beyond the scope of this limited study. The media provided both favorable and unfavorable coverage of the military, reflecting the spectrum of debate on policies concerning the war in Vietnam within Washington, amongst the military, and throughout American society. The military cannot remain blameless for the media’s negative coverage, given events such as the My Lai massacre. In addition, the non-contiguous battlefield, inexperience of reporters, and inability to capture and, thus, frame the complexities of the situation complicated the media’s reporting. In view of this almost exhaustive list of issues, let us examine the military-media relationship throughout this conflict, focusing on U.S. involvement lasting over ten years.

Vietnam serves as the first conflict in which the military did not censor the media, for the most part, given that the military purportedly fought in support of a sovereign South Vietnam and due to the espoused democratic freedom of the press. Like Korea, the military fought a limited war with global implications. However, changes in technology dramatically altered the nature of media dependency upon the military. Television saturation provided the media a medium to

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<sup>69</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 109.



broadcast images directly to the public and policy makers; and improved communication systems allowed rapid transmission, without the military serving as intermediary. These technological improvements restricted the military's capacity for censorship.

The conflict should be broken into two phases for analysis of media impact: pre- and post- Tet (1968), when Washington initiated de-escalation. Initially, media coverage supported military activities, with positive coverage of a military fighting for its nation to contain the evils of communism, reflecting the patriotic view of a democratic nation at war.<sup>70</sup> Reports from the field demonized the enemy, portrayed successful military actions, and abstained from political commentary:

*CBS, August 23, 1965, Walter Cronkite...*American Air Force jets gave Communist Vietnamese their heaviest clobbering of the war today, hurling almost half a million pounds of explosives at targets in the North...bombing raids and infantry sweeps are taking a heavy toll of all kinds of Red equipment.

*CBS, October 31, 1967, Walter Cronkite.* In the war, U.S. and South Vietnamese troops smashed the second Communist attempt in three days to capture the district capital of Loc Ninh...The Allies killed more than 110 VC, boosting the enemy death toll since Sunday to 365. American losses were reported at 4 dead and 11 wounded.<sup>71</sup>

These sound bites represent typical media coverage prior to Tet, where media coverage mirrored government policy and portrayed the war as a struggle between “good and evil,”<sup>72</sup> while avoiding its complexities.

The military established the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) to provide official reports and support the war correspondents in Vietnam. The military initiated

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<sup>70</sup> Young and Jesser, 80.

<sup>71</sup> Hallin, 140-1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 158.

press briefings containing the daily activities of the conflict, which when broadcast by the media became known as the “Five o’clock Follies [sic.]”.<sup>73</sup> The media referred to the briefings sarcastically because their increased exposure and saturation, with nearly 700 correspondents operating in the theater, improved awareness that official information failed to correlate with the war realities they observed.<sup>74</sup> Just prior to Tet in 1968, this realization of disparity between the official message and reality coincided with Northern Vietnamese escalation and growing debate in Washington, complicated further by an approaching presidential election. Mounting military and civilian casualties, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, and the protracted nature of the war compounded the criticality of the media.

Images of Tet, such as the storming of the American embassy in Saigon and the battle for the imperial capital of Hue, contrasted with the official version of military success conveyed by military officials and Washington, creating a “credibility gap”.<sup>75</sup> General Westmoreland charged the “voluminous, lurid and distorted newspaper and particularly television reporting of the Tet offensive...transformed a devastating Communist military defeat into a ‘psychological victory’”.<sup>76</sup> Like Westmoreland, academicians criticize the media for its inaccurate framing of the events during Tet, with its sensationalism; however, they conclude the media’s range of coverage reflected the growing frustration with the war across all three concerned elements of the

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<sup>73</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 110-1.

<sup>74</sup> Knightly, 419.

<sup>75</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 111.

<sup>76</sup> Young and Jesser, 91.

Clausewitzian trinity: the people, the government, and the military.<sup>77</sup> Professor Daniel Hallin, a leading scholar on this subject, remarked, “Tet appeared in the news as a dramatic and disastrous turn of events. But its impact on public opinion and on policy is more complex and less dramatic...Tet was less a turning point than a crossover point, a moment where trends that had been in motion for some time reached balance and began to tip the other way.” While the media continued to rely upon official sources, such as JUSPAO that painted a positive picture of the war, they balanced their coverage with portrayal of divergent perspectives arising from the debates in Washington, the anti-war movement, and balanced battlefield coverage. Thus, the media captured the growing disillusionment with the war, rather than generating it. By reflecting the lack of consensus concerning Vietnam policy, the media’s message reflected unfavorably upon the military, rather than upon the policy makers. This generated a “shoot the messenger” reaction within the military, which faulted the media without correlating responsibility.<sup>78</sup>

### **Low-Intensity Conflicts (Post Vietnam)**

The U.S. war in Vietnam resulted in an adversarial relationship between the military and the media, characterized by a shared lack of trust. Post-Vietnam, the pendulum for censorship swung back to the policies executed by the military during the World Wars. The military maintained an aura of secrecy about its activities and attempted to exclude the press during its involvement in crisis. After military activities became public knowledge, it controlled access by creating press “pools”. This denial of access to information in Grenada (1983) generated outrage

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217. <sup>77</sup> Young and Jesser, 91; Taylor, *Global Communications*, 111-112, and Herman and Chomsky,

<sup>78</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 114.

amongst the media, forcing the military to convene the Sidle Panel. This Panel addressed the balance between the military's operational security requirements and the public's right to information, resulting in the formation of a DOD National Media Pool (NMP).<sup>79</sup> The military tested the NMP concept during the invasion of Panama (1989) with mixed results: the military operation succeeded but at the cost of media restriction. Based upon operational security requirements, the military denied access to the media during the initiation of military activities and then contained its activities in order to control public opinion.<sup>80</sup> Media outrage, again, forced the military to review its media practices, resulting in the recommendation that military planners incorporate media and public affairs into the formal planning process.<sup>81</sup>

### **Desert Shield/Storm**

The 1991 Persian Gulf War marked a conflict where the military successfully used the media to facilitate success. As in Grenada and Panama, security requirements provided the military with the motivation and justification to control media activities utilizing a pool system, managing Military Reporting Teams (MRTs - embedded reporters), and through denial of access. Like other wars, the media depended upon the military for transportation, support, and communication assets, placing them in a passive role. Given the plethora of available information and media competition for timeliness and "getting the scoop", the military successfully executed a media campaign to Western audiences using media output. Furthermore, the proliferation of television as a medium allowed instantaneous global broadcast of the war,

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<sup>79</sup> Barry E. Venable, "The Army and the Media", from Military Review, January – February, 2002, 67-8.

<sup>80</sup> Young and Jesser, 155.

providing the military the capacity to influence public opinion and policy makers globally. Academicians criticize the media for creating “one-sided” coverage failing to generate debate, “‘patriotic’ (or bellicose) [sic.] boosterism”<sup>82</sup> and “[allowing] the military to dictate terms.”<sup>83</sup> Let us examine how the military and its policymakers capitalized on the military-media relationship to contribute to military success.

Concurrent with the arrival of the first media pool into the theater of conflict in Saudi Arabia, the military established a four-tier stratification system for characterizing and interacting with the media during the Gulf War. They instituted media guidelines on 7 January 1991 based upon the recommendations from the Sidle report, delineating twelve categories of restricted military information, designed to protect operational security.<sup>84</sup> The military separated the media into four categories: accredited pool reporters, MRTs, non-pool reporters, and others. Self-selected representatives of the thirty coalition nations’ media comprised the MRTs. The military allowed the MRTs to accompany units to combat areas, compile reports, and then share the reports with the other officially accredited media.<sup>85</sup> While this system of second-hand coverage conflicted with traditional journalistic practices of independence and competition, the media acquiesced to these restrictions in order to gain access to wartime information. While the technology was extant for providing the media the means to transmit copy from the field, the military prohibited the use of the media’s satellite equipment in their pools, claiming that radiated signals interfered with military equipment and provided the enemy the ability to identify military locations, making soldiers and their MRT reporters vulnerable as targets.<sup>86</sup> This prompted one reporter to claim: “each pool member is an unpaid employee of the Department of Defense, on

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<sup>81</sup> Venable, 68.

<sup>82</sup> Bennett and Paletz, 278

<sup>83</sup> Young and Jesser, 189.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 176.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 124-5.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

whose behalf he or she prepares the news of the war for the outer world.”<sup>87</sup> These guidelines also prohibited non-pool reporters’ access to forward areas.

The military’s restrictions placed upon the media reflected their skeptical view towards the media, which arose from the Vietnam experience. The military demonstrated a reluctance to trust the media from a fear that a “prolonged war on television would quickly become insupportable.”<sup>88</sup> General Colin Powell, then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, felt that a televised war would “instantly [bring] home the action, death, consequences and emotions even more graphically than during Vietnam. The reporters and the cameras would be there to record each step, vastly complicating all military tasks.”<sup>89</sup> The military’s capacity to restrict access to information and the controls over message content provided the Western world audience a sanitized and “antiseptic version of the war”.<sup>90</sup>

The military formed the Joint Information Bureau (JIB) to consolidate and centralize the media campaign for the Strategic and Operational Commanders through the Public Affairs (PA) Officials. The JIB provided the military with the forum for military officials to speak directly to Western audiences, without media filtering. During the air war, fought during the first stages of the conflict, the military released video footage from cameras mounted on planes and laser guided missiles. Since the ground war provided no additional sources of information for the journalists, they became dependent upon the military as their sole source of information. Journalists on the ground in Baghdad and Riyadh collected reports on the ensuing ‘scud-fest’, confirming the

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<sup>87</sup> M. Massing quoted in Taylor, *Global Communications*, 125.

<sup>88</sup> Young and Jesser, 175.

<sup>89</sup> General Powell quoted in Young and Jesser, 175.

official military reports.<sup>91</sup> Even Saddam Hussein's media campaign, orchestrated out of Baghdad, echoed the message of U.S. technological superiority, while attempting to paint himself as a victim.

The resultant media output reflected the unanimity of the military's released message. "Despite the existence of well over a thousand journalists in the Gulf from a wide variety of news-gathers organisations [sic] with differing editorial styles and journalistic practices, they were essentially dependent upon the coalition military for their principal source of information about the progress of the war. It was monopoly in the guise of pluralism."<sup>92</sup> Since the media largely supported the war, their reporting reflected the official line, varying only with regard to style. The military, thus, censored the media and limited access only to protect operational security, as the uniformity of voice necessitated little or no censorship of views.<sup>93</sup> This uniform message shaped the public's view of the war as a just war with the limited aims of freeing Kuwait, and the public suspended their right to know the specific details of the war. The public sustained this suspension and supported the war effort, as the war concluded rapidly with minimum coalition casualties.<sup>94</sup>

### **Operations Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Iraqi Freedom**

*When you get an embedded media reporter, it is like the Army handed you a snake and you don't know if it is a boa constrictor or a copperhead.*<sup>95</sup>

...Media will have long-term, minimally restrictive access to U.S. air, ground and naval forces through embedding. Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the National Security Environment now and in the years ahead... Our ultimate strategic success in bringing peace and security to [the Central Command] region will come in our long-term commitment to supporting Democratic ideals. We need to tell the factual story – good or bad – before others seed the media with disinformation and

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Taylor, *Global Communications*, 129.

<sup>92</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 268.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 269.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 273-275.

<sup>95</sup> J. Scott Nelson, Major, U.S. Army, at the School for Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), 19 September 2003.

distortions, as they most certainly will continue to do. Our people need to tell our story – only commanders can ensure the media get to the story alongside the troops [converted to normal text from an all CAPS general text message].<sup>96</sup>

This excerpt from the Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on embedding media for operations in the Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) differs greatly from any military guidance prepared for previous wars in that it intended to facilitate media access to ongoing military operations, with few restrictions. The military designed this guidance to rebuke U.S. journalists' complaints of denied access during the first few months of the campaign in Afghanistan and during the Persian Gulf War. "U.S. Army public affairs officer (PAO) Colonel (ret.) Melanie Reeder... said initial [OEF] public affairs guidance was restrictive and passive because of host-nation sensitivities and limitations."<sup>97</sup> The military designed the embedding program to proactively present a factual view of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) to Western and International audiences and to guide the military's acceptance of embedded reporters into their units, to avoid the "snake" misconception.<sup>98</sup>

A review of the military-media relationship during OIF should be broken down into two phases: combat and post-combat operations. During OIF's major combat operations, "approximately 500 journalists, photographers, and news crews were embedded with U.S. and British military units; another 2000[+] unilateral journalists [accredited, but not embedded] were

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<sup>96</sup> U.S. Secretary Of Defense, Washington, DC//OASD-PA. Subject: "Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on Embedding Media During Possible Future Operations/deployments in the U.S. Central Commands (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR), dated 101900Z FEB 03. <http://www.dod.mil/news/Feb2003/d20030228pag.pdf>; Internet; last accessed 25 February 2004, 1-2.

<sup>97</sup> Tammy L Miracle. "The Army and Embedded Media", from Military Review, September – October 2003. <http://www.iwar.org.uk/psyops/resources/embedded-media/miracle.pdf>; Internet; last accessed 25 February 2004, 41.



in Kuwait.”<sup>99</sup> After President George W. Bush declared the official end to combat operations on May 2, 2003, these reporters “went away”.<sup>100</sup> The military has prepared ‘Lessons Learned’ and conducted workshops evaluating its performance with the media for the combat phase, and academicians have published and commented as well. However, as post-combat operations continue, little exists as far as comprehensive analysis of the nation –building phase of OIF.

Embedding the media profoundly influenced the view of the war portrayed to the American people and Western/International audiences. Units adopted their embedded reporter(s), who lived, ate, and slept amongst soldiers, experiencing the harsh battlefield conditions. However, not all embeds generated the same response from the soldiers amongst whom they served. Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Charles Eassa, Information Operations Officer for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division recalls dealing with two types of reporters: “a reporter who gets it and a reporter who only captures the physical things that he sees. A good example is Thomas Friedman [noted author and columnist for The New York Times]... he understands the complexity. He is able to link separate actions and put together a cohesive picture... Then you get the St. Louis Dispatch, that has a guy there just to say ‘I am with Bravo 3/7<sup>th</sup> CAV and I’m taking pictures. I am telling you what SFC Joe Hansen is doing.’ He provides situational awareness of my little world.”<sup>101</sup> LTC Eassa’s comments reflect the feedback from the ‘lessons learned’ workshop conducted at the U.S. Army War College, which characterized the images captured by the embedded reporters as “spectacular” and “engrossing”, but limited in “perspective or context”.<sup>102</sup>

Critics of embedding feel that reporters lose their objectivity. Los Angeles Times reporter John Henderson, also embedded with the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID, characterized living with the troops as

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<sup>98</sup> SECDEF, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Miracle, 41.

<sup>100</sup> Charles Eassa, interviewed by author, 26 January 2004, Leavenworth, Kansas.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Pasquarett, “Reporters on the Ground”, from Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College (Issue Paper), October 2003, Volume 08-03. <http://carlisle->

“a whole different experience... You definitely have a concern about knowing people that you sympathize with them.”<sup>103</sup> Nonetheless, professional journalists make a conscious effort to write objectively. The prepared guidelines did not win universal appreciation from the media. “A tension existed between freedom of expression and following the rules.”<sup>104</sup> CBS News anchorman Dan Rather “feared that the media would give up its independence in return for access to the front line”.<sup>105</sup> Media academicians question to what extent the military controlled the media’s message though restricted access and censorship for operational security and force protection. “About two dozen journalists were disembodied, forcibly ordered to leave Iraq by their own means or escorted with military assistance.”<sup>106</sup> Geraldo Rivera, mentioned earlier, and Peter Arnett were the most notable of those expelled from the theater. The embedding program proved largely successful for the military and the media alike. The media gained access to battlefield activities and the military provided the lens with which to focus the world’s attention on its successes.

In addition to embedded reporters, unilateral, or officially accredited, reporters covered OIF. While unilateral reporters retained the ability to double check stories with multiple sources, the military did not provide them escorted access to combat zones. The lessons learned from the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division claimed, “unembedded, unilateral journalists routinely released information jeopardizing OPSEC and frequently misreported errors in fact.”<sup>107</sup> Much of the information covered by the unilateral reporters included the daily press briefing by Brigadier General Vince Brooks, spokesman for CENTCOM. Like the Gulf War and Vietnam, the media broadcasted

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[www.army.mil/usacsl/Publications/CSL%20Issue%20Paper%208-03.pdf](http://www.army.mil/usacsl/Publications/CSL%20Issue%20Paper%208-03.pdf); Internet; last accessed 6 February 2004.

<sup>103</sup> Miracle, 44.

<sup>104</sup> Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson, *Embedded: The Media at War in Iraq*. (Guilford, CT: the Lyons Press, 2003), xv.

<sup>105</sup> Miracle, 44.

<sup>106</sup> Katovsky and Carlson, xvi.

<sup>107</sup> U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF): Lessons Learned, May 2003, pp. 33-35. Public Affairs, “Topic: Embedded Media”. <http://www.zmag.org/content/print-article.cfm?itemID=4751&sectionID=15>; Internet; last accessed 6 February 2004.

these briefings directly into the living rooms of the public. However, the media added commentary, using former and retired military personnel. This commentary maintained a strong military slant; the Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, one of Herman and Chomsky's flak agencies, noted 76 percent of the guests on network news and talk shows in the early stages of the war were military or former military.<sup>108</sup>

By July 2003, the number of embedded reporters dwindled to twenty-three,<sup>109</sup> and even fewer journalists currently cover the ongoing nation-rebuilding phase. The embedding program successfully executed Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke's objective "to let people see for themselves through the news media, the lies and deceptive tactics Saddam Hussein will use."<sup>110</sup> Today, broadcast news coverage fails to capture the full spectrum of military operations and activities, highlighting casualties and searing, sensationalized images. LTC Eassa recalled a conversation with his PAO concerning nation-building activities, "we were doing repeated task-force neighborhoods. [The PAO] was 'well, look, third time, no one wants to hear it.' But we are doing good things and no one wants to hear it. That's old news."<sup>111</sup> Support for the war apexed during the combat phase when the military used embedded reporters, and has diminished since then (see Figure 2). Without the embedded journalists, the military faces a challenge of shaping media output while OIF continues.

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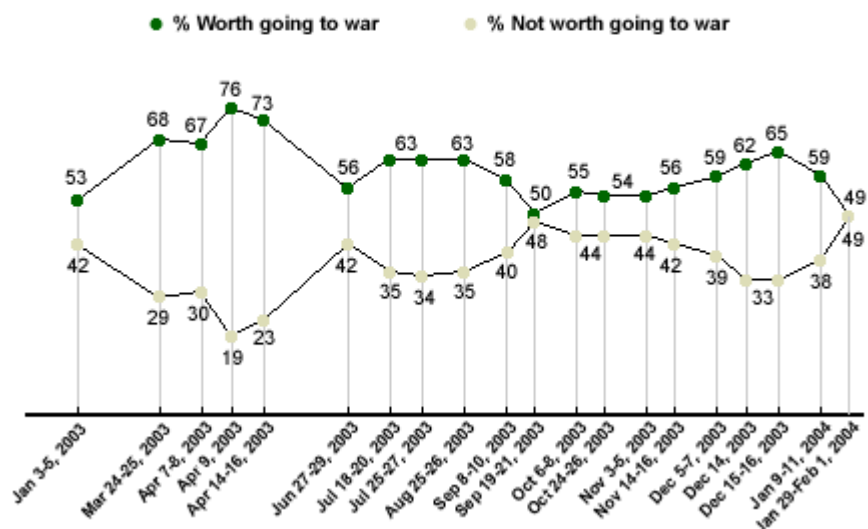
<sup>108</sup> Robert Jensen, "The Military's Media", from The Progressive, May 2003.  
<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~riesen/freelance/attack59.htm>; Internet; accessed 28 September 2003.

<sup>109</sup> Katovsky and Carlson, xviii.

<sup>110</sup> Miracle, 41.

<sup>111</sup> Eassa.

*All in all, do you think it was worth going to war in Iraq, or not?*



**Figure 2: Support for the War in Iraq**

Source: The Gallup Organization, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/focus/sr030610.asp>; Internet; last accessed on 26 February 2004.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# MEDIA-MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

## Historical Trends

The workshop conducted by the U.S. Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership concluded that embedding media with soldiers and marines proved largely successful during OIF. "This unique kind of reporting appears to have won the trust and confidence of the American public."<sup>112</sup> This level of trust between the military and the media echoes back to their relationship enjoyed during the World Wars, under the tutelage of General Eisenhower.

<sup>112</sup> Pasquarett.

Eisenhower stated, “public opinion wins wars”.<sup>113</sup> Maintaining public opinion that favors the military remains a challenge, especially as wars become protracted. Balancing the public’s right to know and the reality of the horrors of war becomes a burden that the media and the military share.

The military has walked a fine line between inclusion and exclusion of media on the battlefield. During the World Wars, the military exercised censorship and centralized their media message to maintain public support. This trend shifted during Vietnam, where the military allowed the media free reign; and, again, back to exclusion during the small wars in Grenada and Panama. The military strictly controlled media access during Desert Storm, resulting in a media backlash. Only Ted Turner and CNN seem to have benefited with CNN’s streaming live video of the scud attacks in Baghdad. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard B. Myers envisioned a role where the media could contribute to the success of the military in OIF. Rumsfeld stated, “the best way to combat [the enemy’s misinformation campaign] was to have accurate, professional journalists on the ground to see the truth of what is going on.”<sup>114</sup> While Rumsfeld realized his vision during the combat phase of OIF, this vision seems to be fading with the disappearance of a centralized media presence in Iraq.

Commanders protect the security of the mission and their forces by practicing operational security by denying release of information prior to the conduct of operations. The Secretary of Defense’s “Public Affairs Guidance” for OIF and OEF detailed rules for placing embargoes, or

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<sup>113</sup> Katovsky and Carlson, xi.

information delays, upon embedded media stating, “Embargoes will only be used for operational security and will be lifted as soon as the operational security issue has passed.”<sup>115</sup> This communication prohibited live broadcasts during the initial phases of combat to maximize “operational surprise” and for force protection.<sup>116</sup> Embedded reporters effectively practice operational security since their safety and survival depend upon it. The War College’s lessons learned indicated the media conducted self-censure more effectively than the military, without discussing self-censure of non-U.S. journalists.<sup>117</sup> While self-policing served well for most of the embeds, the military removed about two-dozen reporters for operational security violations.<sup>118</sup> Historically, the media have respected the military’s security requirements, with the exception of Vietnam, which allowed the military to extend the same level of professional respect towards the media and reduced requirements for deliberate censorship.

## **Media Theory**

The drive for commerce and competition motivated the media to shape their stories to appeal to Western audiences. During the majority of the major conflicts reviewed in this study, the military sought this same audience and fashioned its message accordingly, filtered through the media, in order to maintain public support for the military throughout the conflict. The War College’s lessons learned recognized this symbiotic relationship, discussing the “trust and confidence built between those embattled soldiers and the embedded media.”<sup>119</sup>

The main complaint lodged against the media by the military concerned the level of complexity with which they portrayed conflicts. The War College’s lessons learned alleged, “the

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, xiii.

<sup>115</sup> SECDEF, para 4.E.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, para 4.G.11.

<sup>117</sup> Pasquarett.

<sup>118</sup> Katovsky and Carlson, xvi.

<sup>119</sup> Pasquarett.

‘soda straw’ approach to embedded reports missed the big picture”.<sup>120</sup> Gordon Dillow of The Orange County Register commented upon this trade-off due to embedding, “Your radius of knowledge was basically about three hundred meters across.”<sup>121</sup> Compounding this narrow view of the battlefield, the media pursued the dramatic images and stories that would sell their products and hold their viewers’ attention. “Complexity and substance were sacrificed for the searing images, a burning Iraqi tank or inspiring sound-bite from an exhausted Marine taking a breather from shoving another artillery round into a smoking howitzer.”<sup>122</sup> LTC Eassa echoed these sentiments when he compared Thomas Friedman’s ability to contextualize his coverage to others who did not have his background or ability.<sup>123</sup> Competition between media outlets also drove sensationalization of stories. Those journalists who supplemented their stories with vivid images and human-interest stories personalizing soldiers to their audiences gained and retained viewers. The flag raising, patriotic response by the American audience to OIF coverage was reminiscent of the World Wars.

The media competed for advertisers, as well as viewers, minimalizing and simplifying their coverage. The War College’s lessons learned noted, “An interesting observation during this panel was that the greatest tension might not have been between the military and the news community, but among different media components and between embedded reporters and the unilateral reporters.”<sup>124</sup> Short airing slots led journalists to seek sensational or unique coverage

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Katovsky and Carlson, xvi.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, xvii.

<sup>123</sup> Eassa.

<sup>124</sup> Pasquarett.

that differentiated them from other media sources. This especially challenged the unilateral reporters who covered the daily press conferences and did not have access to the battlefield. Interviewing disparate sources provided another means of differentiation, which has become more apparent during the ongoing nation-building phase of OIF. The media achieved differentiation utilizing technology for immediate transmission. Those with the “scoop” on a story who released it most expeditiously gained audience share earlier and retained viewers and, thus, attracted advertisers. War makes for big media business. As Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson noted in their recently published account on embedded media, “The war helped cable television news. The viewing audience went from 2 million to 7.4 million during those first three weeks [of OIF]. Internet traffic soared. Weblogs proliferated. Newspapers printed special war supplements.”<sup>125</sup> Gaining and retaining viewers becomes the media’s goal during times of conflict.

The immediacy available for media output offers challenges for the military and media alike. With the ability to directly transmit copy and competition to be the first, journalists may have a tendency to abbreviate their verification process and release less than factual or even incorrect information. BBC reporter Nik Gowing stated, “the new [media] transmission platforms from the field... have begun both to bypass and challenge the layered filtering and editing processes of the established broadcast and publishing news mediums” at the expense of accuracy and balance.<sup>126</sup> In order not to alienate their audiences, reporters and military officials also sanitized the realities of war, which supports the political policy of maintaining public

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<sup>125</sup> Katovsky and Carlson, xviii.



support during conflict. These media behaviors consistently followed Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model's three filters of profit orientation, competition for advertising, and sourcing, which diminished the quality and content of media output.

Since the World Wars, the military has utilized spokespersons to address the public utilizing media mediums. Through Desert Storm, the military also provided the media transmission services, allowing the military to exert some modicum of control over media output, with transmission delays and censorship. The media retained the capability of fashioning the output as well throughout the conflicts studied, through selection of the information presented and omission. During Vietnam, this official version of the war proved inconsistent with the realities observed by the journalists, resulting in dissonance between the military and the media. Today's technology affords the capability for officials to transmit their press briefings, using media mediums, directly to the public. At times, the media supplement these briefings with commentary; but they typically do not add much content or context to the official message, raising questions concerning the media's role as the "fourth estate". This practice results in a uniformity of voice and output, in congruence with the official military message and government policy. W. Lance Bennett referred to this phenomenon as "indexing", where media coverage mirrors official policy debate.

### **Strategic Voice?**

The military and the Western media consistently spoke with a strategic voice beginning with the World Wars and continuing through OIF. Robert Jensen, writer for the liberal Progressive, commented concerning early OIF coverage, "U.S reporters weren't taking orders directly from the Pentagon, of course, but one could forgive television viewers for wondering, especially early on. U.S. commanders may have had a few problems on the battlefield, but they

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<sup>126</sup> Gowing.

had little to worry about from the news media – especially on television.”<sup>127</sup> The military focused its media campaigns to appeal to a U.S. or Western audience, rather than including the campaign or conflict’s operational area(s). While maintaining popular support from the American people for military actions remains a logical aim of a media campaign, failure to include non-Western media and their respective audiences limits the media campaign’s impacts upon the operational area.

U.S. precedence since the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN) following the World Wars has been to seek coalition participation in distant wars. Michael Ignatieff, international journalist and commentator, recognized, “The legitimacy of [the U.S.’s] military operations overseas depends on persuading other states to join as coalition partners.”<sup>128</sup> Only recently during OIF did the U.S. willingly conduct a war without UN approval with OIF, even though President George W. Bush sought UN acceptance, using the Global War on Terror (GWOT) as justification. During The Korean War and Vietnam, the U.S. military, its coalition partners, and the media filtered their message(s) to appeal to Western audiences, conforming to Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model fifth filter of containing Communism. The military used the media to facilitate the demonization of North Koreans and North Vietnamese as part of its justification for these wars and to maintain ongoing public support. President Bush used these same tactics to personify Saddam Hussein as a tyrant during Desert Storm and OIF, publicizing his acts of terror and generating fear of Iraqi

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<sup>127</sup> Robert Jensen, “The Military’s Media”, from The Progressive, May 2003. Available from <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~riensen/freelance/attack59.htm>, Internet, accessed 28 September 2003.

weapons of mass destruction. However, these messages of demonization and tyranny failed to gain unilateral acceptance with other than Western audiences.

As the U.S. military increases its participation in military operations other than war (MOOTW), influencing the operational area's public, military, and government audience becomes an integral piece of the military's success. LTC Eassa commented upon OIF's media focus from the CENTCOM and Joint Chiefs of Staff perspective, "all PA ends up being strategic" as CNN reporters embedded with tactical or operational units broadcast to Western audiences, at the exclusion of the "local Arab leaders". He expressed dismay at the lack of a linkage between Brigadier General Brooks, the CENTCOM spokesman operating in the headquarters in Qatar, and the "events unfolding on the battlefield."<sup>129</sup> This disconnect became more apparent after President Bush declared the cessation of OIF's combat phase of operations and the military transitioned to its nation building phase, resulting in the diminishing of even strategic level coverage. The War College's lessons learned working group "concluded that embedded reporters helped balance 'good' and 'bad' news and that their absence in Iraq today may account for the near absence of positive reporting from that nation."<sup>130</sup> LTC Eassa said that the U.S. military would not accredit the Arab reporters and used Western and coalition spokespersons, rather than Iraqis, to comment upon nation building achievements.<sup>131</sup> This practice fails to achieve the military's objectives of presenting an independent and self-sufficient Iraq and reduces credibility. Furthermore, he stated, "What resonates in the U.S. does not necessarily resonate in the Arab world."<sup>132</sup> While universal audiences view CNN and other Western media mediums, the message presented does not address them. It disregards cultural sensitivities and the audience within operational commanders' area of operations because these audiences fall outside of the commercial media's interest.

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<sup>128</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 205.

<sup>129</sup> Eassa.

<sup>130</sup> Pasquarett.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

### Clausewitz Revisited

This monograph has demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between the military and the media. We introduced this relationship in the first chapter. The military uses the media as a medium to reach the public and policy makers, or government – with these three acting as agents of Clausewitz’s paradoxical trinity with the inter-positioning of the media between them, as discussed in the introduction. While the media concentrates broadcast and transmission of military information towards the U.S. and Western public, the proliferation of technology and improvements for access to non-Western audiences broadens the scope of the public reached and provides an untapped and untargeted audience for the military and the media, alike. The media, at times, filter this military information through selection of frames and through creation of stories, while excluding some information. We examined media theory and motivations in the second chapter. The military also exerts input to media frames and the resultant output by providing access and freedom of mobility within combat zones. Thus, the military has the opportunity to fashion the message directed to the public and the policy makers, while taking into consideration the filtering processes and mechanisms of the media. The third chapter explored the interaction between the media and military from the World Wars through the combat phase of OIF and the initial stages of Iraq nation-building. The fourth chapter applied the history of the military-media relationship to the theory introduced in chapter two.

When media broadcast military press conferences and use spokespersons and official sources, the military has the opportunity to transmit messages and information over media mediums without media filtering. This provides the military direct access to the public and to policy makers. The media reintroduces filters with commentary upon these official messages,

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

adding supplementary video, and through editing. The public and policy makers rely upon the media for access to information concerning military activities, and demand accuracy and honesty. The media, however, have the enviable position for gauging the public's information desires while catering to commercial enterprises, resulting in simplification and sanitization of military activities, sensationalism, and failure to present a conflict within its contextual complexity.

Historically, the military and media characterized their relationship as adversarial. OIF's combat phase shows marked improvement in this mutually dependent relationship. With the embedding of media within military units, the military and media functioned as a team while presenting the story of OIF's military operations. The media captures military operations in stories, imagery, and crafted frames to create what will become the publicly known version of the engagement and, subsequently, the military's recorded history. The *History Channel* recently created and broadcast a documentary of the first year's history of OIF using commentary from servicemen involved in the conflict and media footage captured by both Western and non-Western journalists.<sup>133</sup> Publishers, many owned by media conglomerates, have published accounts of the war. These types of products, as well as continuing OIF coverage in broadcast and other print mediums, generate revenues for the media, while serving the public and policy makers' information requirements and the military's need to maintain their support for its operations and inform the public. This places the media in its role as the "fourth estate."

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<sup>133</sup> The A & E *History Channel* released and broadcast its "The Iraq War: One Year Later" series beginning on 14 March 2004.

## **Recommendations**

The military-media relationship can no longer be characterized as adversarial. With the ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military and the media more often interact in an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation. Both recognize the importance of this symbiotic relationship and their responsibilities to the public and the policy makers in times of crisis. The military must obtain and retain public support during participation in distant wars and engagements and, additionally, keep the public informed so that the public may play its role in the democratic process. The international public plays an ever-increasing role influencing policy, especially since the U.S. typically seeks coalition support during times of conflict, and must be included in the military's consideration during execution of its media campaign.

In order to leverage the military-media relationship going forward such that the media not only act as an information conduit between the military and the public and policy makers but also support the commanders' objectives in an area of operations, the implementation of several programs could improve the quality of the media message in support of support military objectives: 1) Establish centralized media campaign bodies. 2) Define, delineate and increase the interactions between the Public Affairs (PA) community and the Information Operations (IO). 3) Engender a mutually productive relationship between the military and media. And 4) Improve official press briefings and broadcasts. Let us examine each of these recommendations.

During the World Wars, the government and military orchestrated a centralized media campaign from an office of public information, carefully crafting their messages to support the wars' aims. As government bureaucracy expanded into disparate departments, such as the Departments of Defense and State, and media more vociferously demanded access to military information along with their First Amendment rights to freedom of the press, centralization of the military's media campaigns eroded. With the decentralization of media campaign orchestration, the military lost the ability to send a unified message and gauge the public's response. To overcome this shortcoming, the military should establish centralized Media Campaign Bureaus,

headquarters, or Joint Task Force boards throughout the various levels of the chain of command. This structure would develop, manage, and implement the media campaign to orchestrate the delivery of a unified message in accordance with the commanders' objectives throughout the various levels of operations, from the national strategic and through the tactical level.

The execution of this media campaign requires a more concise delineation of PA versus IO roles and may necessitate a restructuring of both communities with the addition of personnel to carry out these duties. Currently, the PA mainly interacts with the traditional media presenting the strategic view of operations, broadcasting to the Western audience. IO, on the other hand, focus on shaping the commanders' area of operations. Both interact with the traditional and some local media, yet they fail to coordinate a unified campaign with a centralized message.

Establishment of a media bureau with subordinate elements would facilitate the integration of a media campaign to support the commanders' objectives through definition of roles and assignment of responsibility, as well as unification of the message. Media now measure the success of their coverage to the public in profits, irrespective of the government or the military, which must be taken into consideration while planning the media campaign. However, the military must balance the perception of an orchestrated media campaign with dissemination of factual, accurate, and timely information to retain the trust of the public and the media, while keeping media motivations and the filters of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model in mind.

In addition to establishing solid relationships with the traditional media, each Combatant Commander should identify local media throughout his theater and incorporate them into his Theater Cooperation Security Plan. Organizations such as the Federal Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) provide information concerning international media sources. After identification of appropriate media representatives, the military should build relationships with these sources during peacetime, such that it may capitalize upon these relationships at times of crisis.

Technology has increased the proliferation and reach of information, yet the U.S. military continues to fashion its media campaigns to speak to an American or Western audience. During

Stability and Support Operations (SASO), MOOTW, and/or nation-building phases of a campaign, communicating the campaign's objectives with the local populace becomes an integral piece of the military operation's success. LTC Eassa stated that CENTCOM prohibited the incorporation of local journalists from the area of operations within the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID media pool. In order to speak to the local populace, the military needs to include media representatives from the campaign's area of interest while protecting OPSEC. This will aid in creating an atmosphere conducive to the conduct of non-hostile military activities, mould local and international expectations concerning the campaign's objectives, and generate cooperation and understanding of military activities.

International media conglomerates, such as CNN and the BBC, reach audiences globally. Inclusion of cultural, religious, historical, and political information will not only improve knowledge of the operational area and its peoples for the media and its audiences, but also capture some of the complexity of the scenario in which the military is involved. Cultural awareness can advance empathy between the local populace and the military in the area of operations and influence public opinion and policy makers both locally and abroad. Two methods to broaden the media's scope come to mind: 1) prepare educational information electronically or in read-ahead packets for participating media, and 2) conduct education with media representatives as a condition for their deployment as military media representatives. The military can reinforce this education with inclusion of this cultural information throughout its media campaign during ongoing operations. In addition to inclusion of local media, the military must work with traditional media sources to craft messages that appeal to other than the primary Western audiences.

One complaint raised about media coverage of OIF concerned the media's lack of familiarity with military activities and their units of embed. To overcome this, the military should consider establishing permanent relationships with media representatives. The media, as professionals, would then be challenged with maintaining objectivity. The media boot camp



conducted prior to OIF developed a moderate level of knowledge with the reporters who attended, but did not compensate for the disparate backgrounds of media involved. Nevertheless, the embedding program during OIF proved largely successful and should be maintained and expanded. The embeds lend credibility to the reporting and personalized the military to the viewing audience, while earning the military's trust with their respect of OPSEC and their practice of self-policing. Lastly, the embedded reporters countered the misinformation campaign launched by Saddam Hussein, accomplishing the goals set by Public Affairs.

In addition to working with the media to improve the complexity of their message, relatedness to the military, and breadth of coverage, military personnel must understand the ground rules for interacting with the media. Military personnel at every level must be educated on the media's ground rules of engagement and the objectives of the media campaign established by the media bureau, in conjunction with the commander. Military personnel must understand that media function as a combat multiplier and receptively and proactively interact with media representatives as a member of their team. This will engender an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation and allow the military to tell its story through the media.

Official press briefings and broadcasts must be coordinated as part of the cohesive media campaign planned by the media campaign bureau structure. The military may unify its message by focusing on the campaign's objectives and reinforcing them throughout releases and briefings by graphically depicting effective completion of stated military objectives. The CENTCOM commander placed his objectives for OIF, which aligned with President Bush's national objectives, on the CENTCOM web page; yet, the media campaign failed to reinforce this common thread during press conferences or through other public mediums. Posting a chart depicting percentage complete of military objectives as a backdrop to press conferences and briefings could contribute to focusing the media and their audiences upon the military's accomplishments while keeping the local populace informed concerning the military's progress in meeting those objectives.

The military should view the media as a combat multiplier, facilitator of humanitarian assistance activities, and fashion this relationship accordingly. The media must be included as early as possible within a military operation's planning to build a level of knowledge for the media representatives and to foster solid relationships. The media provide an essential service to American democracy, providing the link between the military and the public and policy makers. With the immediacy with which information travels from the battlefield, via the media, to the world audience, the military must effectively communicate their message to promote mission accomplishment.

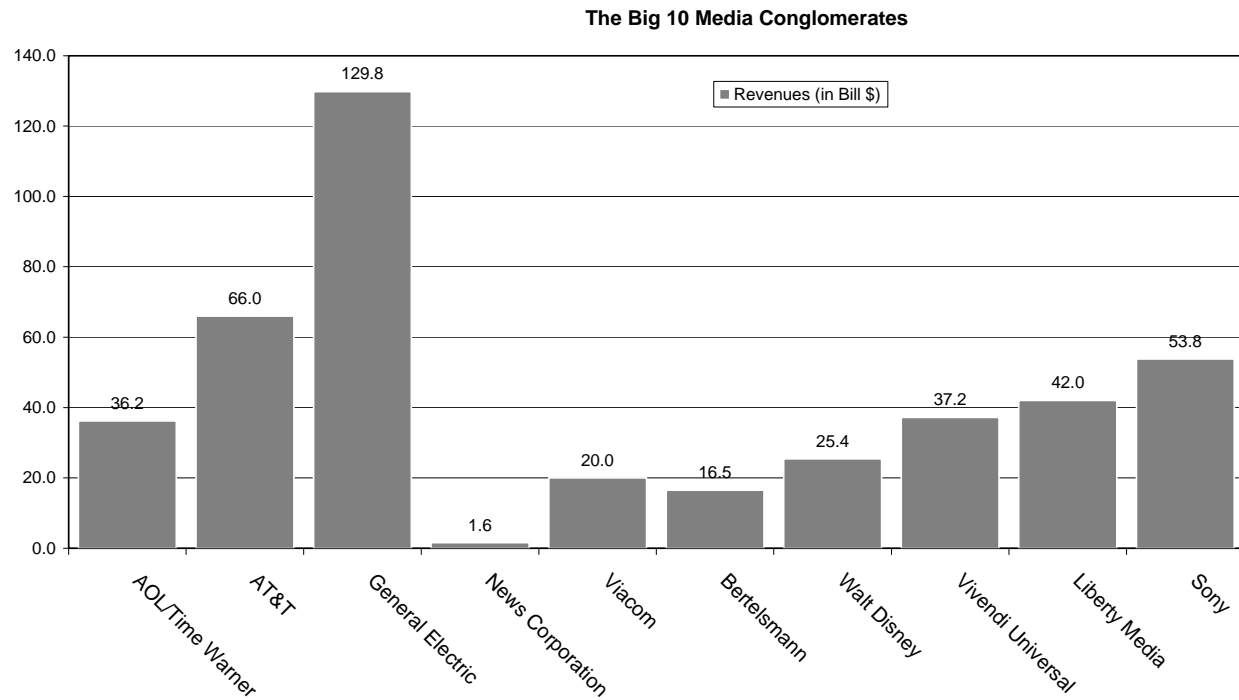
## **APPENDIX 1: MEDIA OWNERSHIP**

### **Concentration of Ownership of Newspapers, U.S., 1993**

Corporation	Daily Circulation	Number of Dailies	Sunday Circulation
Gannett Co.	6,101,961	83	6,179,861
Knight-Ridder	3,765,010	28	5,257,542
Newhouse	3,047,596	26	3,919,260
Times Mirror	2,759,633	9	3,497,784
Dow Jones	2,404,361	22	513,937
New York Times Co.	2,126,183	24	2,713,614
Thomson Newspapers	2,122,018	110	1,948,587
Tribune Co.	1,404,790	6	2,071,334
E.W. Scripps	1,402,871	21	1,409,148
Cox Enterprises	1,388,899	18	1,884,987

Source: Dean E. Alger, *The Media and Politics*, 2 ed., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1996), 90.

## The Big 10 Media Conglomerates



Source: Data from <http://thenation.com/special/bigten.html> accessed on 23 December 2003, and current as of 20 December 2001.

## **APPENDIX 2: SOMALIA (1992)**

### **Media Coverage of Somalia January through November**

Phase	Dates	Total Time (min.)	Time per week (min.)
1	January 1 – July 21	5.6	0.2
2	July 22 – August 13 (Senate calls for action)	15.4	4.7
3	August 14 – September 18 (airlift of aid)	55.3	10.8
4	September 19 – November 8	4.2	0.6
5	November 9 – November 25 (Senate calls for Intervention)	16.3	6.7

Source: Mermin 123 and Robinson 46-49.

### **Total New York Times, Washington Post, CBS and CNN Coverage of Somalia (pre- and post- Intervention)**

	5-25 Nov.	26 Nov. – 4 Dec.	5-9 Dec.
No. of articles	16	50	76
Average # articles/day	0.76	5.5	15.2
CBS coverage	3 min. 30 sec.	46 min. 30 sec.	85 min. 10 sec.
CNN coverage	5 news segments (av. 0.24/day)	169 news segments (av. 16.9/day)	238 news segments (av. 47.6/day)

Source: Robinson 53.

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